

The Underwood Gardens

On the Outskirts of Hutchinson

By J. C. MOHLER



HAVING been asked to give my impressions of the Underwood Gardens on the outskirts of Hutchinson, which it was my good fortune to visit last July, I agreed to do so. Settling myself for this purpose, I find I feel a good deal like the cub reporter who, having been caught in a disastrous railroad wreck, wired his newspaper that it was too awful to write about instead of taking advantage of the situation to give his paper in full the first account of the accident. He was simply overcome by the tragic occurrence. I feel quite a bit that way about the Underwood Gardens. I was so surprised by what I saw, I hardly feel equal to expressing my real impressions.

This much I can say, I didn't know before that there was anything like it in Kansas and while there is a great deal I don't know about this great state it is a part of my business to keep pretty well posted. I presume there are no gardens anywhere more noteworthy than Mr. Underwood's, and I also presume, and this presumption is so strong with me I consider it a fact, that there is no one more competent than Mr. Underwood to successfully manage such an enterprise. It takes brains, brains of the finest quality and in working order daily. This will be self-evident I believe to anyone when the fact is stated that on ten acres, with an investment of \$35,000 or more, and a monthly payroll of \$1500, every year, save one, a profit has been made and Mr. Underwood has been in the business for several years.

The Underwood Gardens are devoted exclusively to producing vegetables, tomatoes, celery, cucumbers, cabbage, rhubarb, and asparagus, as examples. In addition to what is grown outdoors, Mr. Underwood has an acre and a half under glass, and I suspect one of the secrets of his success is that he has his produce on the market when the other fellow hasn't. I might say his fruit is produced out of season, which puts it at once in the list of delicacies.

You know yourself how you hanker for a tomato and cucumber before and after the regular open garden season. My wife will hardly look at a tomato in August, but along in the winter, when tomatoes are twenty cents a pound, it is difficult to appease her appetite for them. Mr. Underwood, I imagine, caters more or less to the twenty-cent trade, and that the local folks can afford to pay the price is in-

dicated by the fact that most of his produce is sold in Hutchinson. Incidentally Hutchinson is one of the most important produce centers in the state.

The great trellises in the Underwood Greenhouses sagging beneath the tomato and cucumber vines heavily laden with fruit, was a wonderful sight. There were thousands of tomatoes and cucumbers in all stages of development, and I thought to myself there were plenty in view to provide the needs of the German army for a long time. But Mr. Underwood casually remarked that the season was over, and these vines would be torn at once, and the beds prepared for other crops.

Mr. Underwood's land, bordering the classic Cow Creek, is naturally rich, and the crops he raises under most intensive methods take heavy toll in fertility. Naturally he fertilizes, mostly however with manure, re-enforced to some extent with commercial fertilizers. For his greenhouse beds he uses liquid manure; that

is, he stores manure in vats that look like abbreviated silos, pours water over the manure in those vats, draws off the brine and uses that for fertilizer. Some idea of the yields may be had from the returns of cabbage, 17 tons from an acre, and when I was there he was setting out thousands, maybe millions, of celery plants. The outdoor gardens are irrigated by the overhead sprinkling system, the water falling in a spray.

Mr. Underwood carries on his work in a most scientific manner. That is of course a necessity. He is an expert at plant breeding, and I had the pleasure of seeing some of his experimental beds of tomatoes, where he is endeavoring to produce a maximum fruit of desirable size from a suitable stalk. He thinks the "best" he now has may be improved upon, and his watchword is "improvement", to produce more and better fruit at the same or less cost, which of course will yield greater profits.

While Mr. Underwood owns the world-famed orchards that bear his name, near Hutchinson, his gardens seem to be his hobby. We found him at the gardens, directing his corps of employees, seeing that things were not only done right but that they were done when they should be done. His explanation of his system revealed why he succeeds so admirably with his 10-acre gardens. He knows the why and the how, and has his plans worked out long in advance of the time they are to be put in effect.

One crop after another, maximum production, scientific methods, and intelligent management throughout have resulted in an almost incredible, maybe unprecedented showing, of what may be done on ten acres of fertile land—of Kansas land. It is an old saying that what has been done may be duplicated. Possibly, by some. There are doubtless others who are capable of making successes on small areas, intensively cultivated and intelligently handled, but I suspect they are few. Mr. Underwood's experience does not indicate the unlimited opportunities in Kansas for similar undertakings, for conditions of soil and climate are unsurpassed and Kansas has thousands of acres of as rich soil, and located advantageously. Our transportation facilities are excellent, and markets are near at hand. In fact, as I have stated, I understood Mr. Underwood to say that most if not practically all of his produce is sold in Hutchinson.

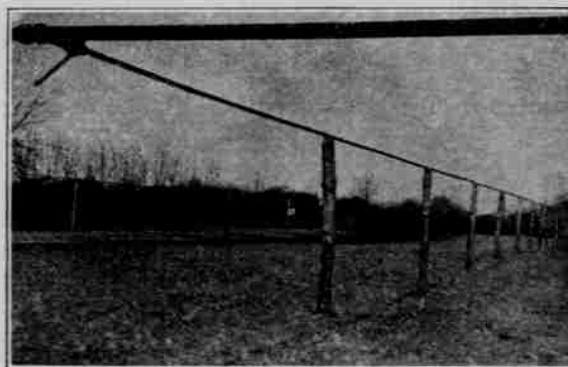
Mr. Underwood is certainly accomplishing something in the world; he is doing things worth while. He is helping feed the multitudes, and he is doing it in a manner to merit the plaudits of all thinking people. Why are not such achievements as Mr. Underwood's sought out and proclaimed? Nothing could be more worthy of publicity nor more productive of lasting good. He is a producer of the necessities of life, and the returns to him are yielded up from the soil and out of the air—a wholly new wealth, and a wealth to get which no one has

plundered; the soil was not even robbed. Yet, miles and miles of notices are given to the blatant politicians who contribute little or nothing to the real substantial upbuilding of the country, the development of its resources, or in promoting any one's prosperity except their own. Let's hear more

about the Underwoods, and hold them up as idols to pattern after and examples to follow. I'm glad Mr. Underwood is a Kansan. I'm proud of him and what he is doing, and I'm happy he's doing it in Kansas. Possibly no one Kansan could be called "Kansas' Most Useful Citizen", but, if so, I nominate Mr. Underwood for the title. Like most great men, men who are doing things really worth while in the world, Mr. Underwood is modest. He'll probably resent this little effusion of mine because of its publicity, but I wish the world might know, and especially that best part of it called Kansas, what a wonder-worker Mr. Underwood is. He should hear the ring of the applause that is merited by the man who achieves the unusual along worthy lines. Mr. Underwood does not need applause; he probably does not want it, for he must derive a full measure of satisfaction from a consciousness of a work well done. That is all the encouragement he himself really needs—that, and the knowledge that the business pays.



TOMATOES—A WINTER DELICACY



OVERHEAD SPRINKLING SYSTEM

Saved Lettuce, Radishes and Peas, when temperature was 13 degrees by using water all night. 1 1/4 inches ice formed on top. Sun very hot all day melted ice late in afternoon.



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